EML Accent

Fall 11
Volume 9

Mansfield University
English & Modern Languages Newsletter

Collaborative Writing Retreat: The Cabin at Shotpouch Creek

—Judith Sornberger

My friend Alison Townsend and I were selected to receive one of two "Autumn" collaborative retreats at the Cabin at Shotpouch Creek in the Oregon coastal range and spent the last two weeks of August there writing and sharing our work. So what's a "collaborative retreat"? The opportunity is offered by the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature, and the Written Word out of Oregon State University. Writers and artists are invited to apply in pairs. Each pair outlines either a shared project or two individual projects that are, in some way, complemented by the individuals' sharing the time and the cabin.

Alison and I had met twenty-two years ago when we both had writing residencies at the Cottages at Hedgebrook on Whidbey Island in the Puget Sound.

Since that time we have maintained an epistolary friendship, encouraged and inspired one another, and shared our writing. Each of

(Continued on page 3)

Ticos and Tropical Ecology

—Carissa Ganong

I graduated from Mansfield in 2006 with a double major in Biology and Spanish and the goal of becoming a Tropical Ecologist. I knew, of course, that being a *hispanohablante* would be a useful skill to have, but I don't think I imagined at the time just how indispensable it would be to my career.

Two years ago I started the Ecology doctorate program at the University of Georgia, joining an Aquatic Ecology lab with projects based throughout Central America and the Caribbean. My advisor was impressed by the fact that I was already fluent in the language spoken at most of our field sites, and my first "job" – even before I arrived in Georgia – was to act as translator and field assistant on a two-week insect-collecting trip to the Panama mountains (from my point of view, an all-expenses-paid vacation!) with a non-Spanish-speaking labmate.

I'm currently developing a dissertation that explores the causes and effects of natural acidification in rainforest streams; the fieldwork is based in Costa Rica, and I now spend a few months every year living and traveling in a Spanish-speaking country and collaborating closely with *tico* researchers and technicians.

(Continued on page 2)

Please, send news, announcements, and contributions to: ksanner@mansfield.edu

Contributions:

Collaborative Writing Retreat.....1
English Professors Lecture Abroad.....3
Happiness in the Middle.....2
Ticos and Tropical Ecology.....1
Why I Study English.....2

News:

Faculty News.....4
Mansfield's New Poetry Club.....4
Shakespeare Students Attend Play.....4
Sigma Tau Delta News.....3
Student News.....5

Ticos and Tropical Ecology

(Continued from page 1)

This project would be enormously difficult without a good understanding of Spanish and an appreciation of Latino culture. And speaking Spanish has also been an extremely useful skill in the US: I recently received a research grant awarded to Spanish-speakers who base their research in Hispanic countries, and I have worked as a tutor for *hispanohablantes* learning English as well as for "*gringos*" learning Spanish.

In a time of high educational costs and academic careers of increasingly narrow focus, it can be tempting to try to avoid "courses that I really don't need right now." But I would urge everyone, no matter what your major, strongly to consider putting some time into language courses and striving to become fluent in a foreign language. In today's era of globalization, it doesn't matter whether you're traipsing around the world or planning to stay in the USA all your life…the ability to communicate in another language can be an invaluable asset to your career, sometimes in totally unexpected ways.

CHEMED
CENTER FOR HEALTH EDUCATION

Happiness in the Middle of an Adrenaline Rush

—Krista Hutcherson

I stepped on Mansfield University's campus for the first time in 2007, a declared Spanish major before taking my first class. To most people, a student declaring a major before getting to college would make them appear ahead of the game. But anyone who asked me about career plans during my freshman and sophomore year heard, "I'm not sure yet." I knew for a fact that I did not want to teach Spanish, but could not tell anyone any more than that. There were times when studying without a plan scared me. Here I was, supposed to be preparing for my future and I had no clue what I wanted to do besides speak Spanish!

However powerful my fear was at some points, my gut feeling was even stronger. I had nothing against Spanish teachers or professors, but I knew that I would be miserable if I chose anything other than a job where I would speak Spanish all day, every day. Right before my junior year, I researched interpretation as a career. It was something that I was comfortable with as an idea and,

(Continued on page 5)

Why I Study English at Mansfield University…

Jordan Hallock My first impression of the English Department at Mansfield came with my first Composition course that I took with Dr. Pifer. I had no idea that she would be a zombie fanatic; I was hooked on English from the point in my freshman year when I wrote an analysis about the movie *Fido*. After I had realized that I could study more than just the classics, I began exploring the special topics courses that MU had to offer. I soon discovered Graphic Novel, a course taught by Prof. Sullivan-Blum. After I read graphic novels like *Blankets* and *Watchmen*, I was captivated by the broad course selection offered by Mansfield's English Department. Shortly after taking Graphic Novel, I decided to change my major from Chemistry to English Education. One of the most important decisions of my college career couldn't have been more easily transitioned, thanks to Prof. Sullivan-Blum, Dr. Pifer, and Dr. Ulrich. These educators opened my eyes to the lighthearted side of literature (something I didn't know existed). I was allowed to choose Prof. Sullivan-Blum as my advisor, a freedom that really helped me feel at home in the English department.

As I entered the department, I was a little nervous that I wasn't ready for course work due to my inexperience; all of this changed when I met Dr. Sanner and Dr. Doerkson. Dr. Sanner opened my eyes to the analytical side of English, and she pushed me to explore the deepest depths of myself in order to find meaning in the books that I was studying. Dr. Doerkson showed me that my writing had to be polished like a diamond before I could earn an A. These two professors in conjunction showed me that Mansfield's English Department was as academically sound as any, and the level of competition combined with high expectations from the professors created a great learning environment. In addition to the high academic standards set by the faculty, there is also an unmatched level of support that the department has to offer. I can say from experience, that I have been to most of my professors' offices. Mansfield's English faculty is my reason for staying at this university; without these genuine educators I would surely transfer.

Shannon Niglio Being an English major at Mansfield University has been quite an experience. With our University being so small, you get to interact with your classmates and professors in a way that not many other universities offer. I have changed my major three times since being here at Mansfield and I have definitely found my niche in English. The classes are small with some only containing eighteen students. In small classes I feel as though the students get a better learning experience because you can have discussions about what you are reading. Some of the English professors even know my name even though I haven't had any classes with them. I can definitely say the English department here at Mansfield University really works hard to help students achieve the best.

Cabin at Shotpouch Creek

(Continued from page 1)

us proposed a project that we would work on during the two-week period. One stipulation was that at least one of the projects would have a strong focus on the natural world. Alison's project was a continuation of a nonfiction prose project she has been working on about a sense of place in her work and her life. My project was a continuation of a poetry book manuscript tentatively titled Window on a Different Landscape, poems that, in one way or another, have to do with windows. Both projects focused in very different ways on the natural world.

The beauty of such a retreat is being given the luxury of time to focus entirely on writing in a beautiful setting. (There was no cost to us, except getting there, and we were given a food stipend.) Once home to old growth forests of Douglas fir and cedar, the property on which our gorgeous cedar cabin was situated offered hiking trails in the mountains and a sweet little creek to explore. Although we took advantage of these amenities, our days were spent writing and reading for the most part. At the end of each day we would meet up to prepare dinner together. After dinner, we would share a glass of wine and read to each other from the day's writing. What a treat it was to hear what Alison had written that day and to be able to instantly share what I had written. We encouraged each other and commented on possible changes. It was heavenly.

(Continued on page 6)

English Professors Lecture Abroad

—Lynn Pifer

Dr. Lynn Pifer and Dr. John Ulrich traveled to China in May to deliver lectures at universities in the cities of Nanjing and Changshu. The pair were invited to lecture in Nanjing by Dr. Guanghui Zhao, Vice-Dean of the Foreign Languages Department at China Pharmaceutical University, and Professor Xiaohong Wu, professor at Changshu Institute of Technology. Dr. Zhao was a visiting scholar at Mansfield University during Fall 2010, and Prof. Wu was a visiting scholar at Mansfield in the Spring 2010 semester. Both scholars visited Mansfield as part of the 1 + 2 + 1 Exchange Program. The 1+2+1 dual-degree program allows Chinese students to complete their first year at their home university, their next two years at MU, and then their final year back at their home institution. When the students complete the program, they receive diplomas from both MU and their home

(Continued on page 5)

Sigma Tau Delta News

Sigma Tau Delta, fondly referred to as STD (yes, we know), is an international English honors society that promotes: cultural and literary stimulation, achievement in studies, the fostering of all aspects of the English language, and an excellence of character. Here, at Mansfield University, we have our own recently resurrected chapter for Sigma Tau Delta called Mu Xi. In order to become a member of this chapter, one must have a GPA of 3.3 and be either: an English major; an English minor; a creative writing minor; or a Spanish major or minor.

This year Mu Xi is planning to support the new poetry club by holding a bake sale at the club's open mike night October 23, and possibly reading some of the members' own works there. STD will also continue to support Better World Books, an organization that provides books to third world countries with its annual book drive. Plans are underway to attend a live production of *Illuminated Bodies* at Ithaca College too. Members of the organization also have access to publishing opportunities. There are two international journals: *The Rectangle*, which publishes a creative issue and a critical issue and *The Sigma Tau Delta Review*, which publishes essays on educational issues. Besides this, STD gives many grants and scholarships to members, as well as internships. This year STD is holding its annual convention in New Orleans and we hope to send a few members, not only to present some of their papers, but also to attend some of the workshops, and to meet other likeminded individuals from all over the world.

—Marta Knapp

Shakespeare Students Attend Play

A group of twelve students and faculty from Dr. Washington's Fall 2011 Shakespeare classes attended *Taming of the Shrew* at the Sayre Theater, Sayre, PA this month. The production was sponsored by the Bradford County Regional Arts Council and performed by The National Players, America's longest running professional theatre troupe. The play featured a wild, wild, west setting for the feud between the sexes; costumes and props included cowboy boots, whips, lassos, six-guns, and ten gallon hats.

The players, all twelve of them, graciously returned after the performance to host a "talk back" session with the MU group. Students got a chance to praise parts of the performance they enjoyed and ask questions about the choices the actors made in putting on the play: "How were you able to maintain the sense of a happy ending in the midst of Kate's final submission to Petruchio?" asked one student? "How difficult was it to focus on your lines given the emphasis and energy put into the physical comedy?" asked another. Our students represented the EML department and MU well with their thoughtful and informed questions during the talkback.

Thanks to the English and Modern Language Department for covering the cost of transportation for this very rewarding field trip.

by Ed Washington

Mansfield's New Poetry Club Listens to Tony Hoagland Read His Poetry

On October 4th Mansfield's newly founded Poetry Club, along with some Sigma Tau Delta members, took a field trip to Bucknell University for a poetry reading by Tony Hoagland. After briefly getting lost – can you blame us? We're all English Majors! – we arrived at Bucknell. The previous week the Poetry Club had read some of Hoagland's work so we would know what to expect, however, we were all blown away. Hoagland reads his work with such passion, energy, and hilarity that by the end of the night we were all laughing and crying at the same time. Great poets sometimes are not very good readers, but Hoagland is superb at both writing and presenting his works. He read a plethora of his own work, but every so often he would recite a poem by someone else, tying them together seamlessly. Most students in our group said that "Romantic Moment" was their favorite, and I agree. "Romantic Moment" is a short poem about a boy and a girl who are just beginning to date, and the boy is thinking what he would do if he were an animal: "If I were a bull penguin right now I would lean over / and vomit softly into the mouth of my beloved". We all bought books, and after the reading, Hoagland signed our copies and spent a few minutes talking with each of us. I bought his newest book of poems *Unincorporated Persons in the Honda Dynasty.*

by Meganne Wheeler

Faculty News

Dr. Andrea Harris's essay "The Morphing of Generation XX" is forthcoming in *Generation X Goes Global: Mapping a Youth Culture in Motion*, to be published in 2012 by Routledge. In April she presented a paper entitled "Borowski's 'World of Stone': The Concentration Camp in the World"at the Northeast Modern Language Association Conference at Rutgers University. Currently she is working on an article on Borowski's Auschwitz poetry.

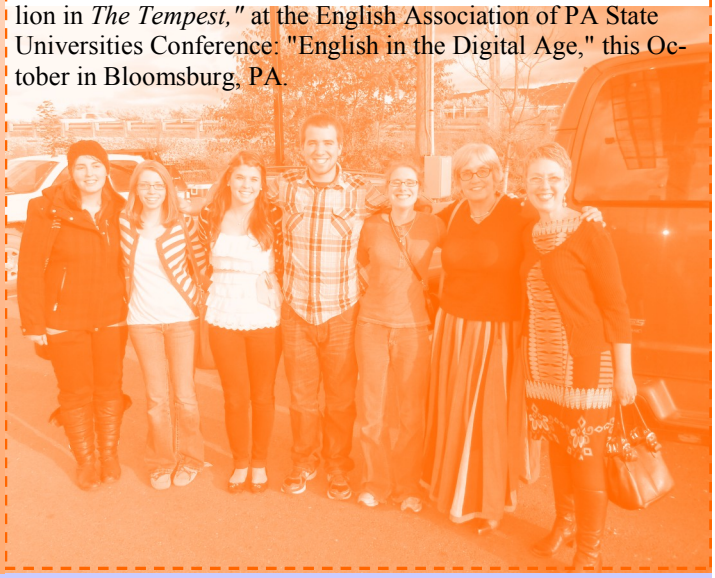
Dr. William Keeth presented his paper "El rol de la traducción en *Las moradas*" at Tufts University in the *Quinto Congreso Internacional de Peruanistas en el Extranjero* conference (October 2011).

Dr. Lynn Pifer and Dr. John Ulrich traveled to China and gave lectures at two universities last May. **Dr. Pifer's** article, "Slacker Bites Back: Shaun of the Dead finds New Life for Deadbeats," appears in Fordam University Press's recently published anthology, *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of Zombie as Post-Human*, edited by Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro. Also, Dennis Miller did a "Conversations" video with her about zombies that he has posted with the MUYouTube videos.

Dr. Kristin Sanner's essay "The Literature Cure" (http://chronicle.com/article/The-Literature-Cure/128792/) appeared in the Sept. 2nd issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In July she travelled to Rome, Italy, to present her essay "What Mothers See: The Averted Maternal Gazes of 'Roman Fever' and *Daisy Miller"* at the International Henry James Conference and in October her poem "Carrying On" will be exhibited as part of the "Windows" collaborative at Butternut Gallery in Montrose, PA.

Dr. Judith Sornberger has a new chapbook of poems coming out this semester from Evening Street Press. The title is *Wal-Mart Orchid*.

Dr. Ed Washington presented his paper "Authority and Rebellion in *The Tempest,"* at the English Association of PA State Universities Conference: "English in the Digital Age," this October in Bloomsburg, PA.



Happiness in the Middle of an Adrenaline Rush

(Continued from page 2)

thanks to the high Latino population where I lived, had a bit of experience doing. What's more, I constantly found myself trying to speak Spanish to every Latino/a I knew. Within a few months, I knew exactly what I was meant to do. I was going to become a Spanish medical interpreter.

In May of 2011, I graduated from Mansfield University with my Bachelor's degree in Spanish. Over 200 applications and two months later (it was much more painful than it sounds), I landed a job at a health center called CHEMED-Center for Health Education, Medicine, and Dentistry. I am now one of three of CHEMED's Spanish-speaking employees that act as interpreters for under and uninsured Latin American patients. So many people need our help that we rarely get through an hour of our work as medical records clerks without interpreting. During the majority of my shift, I am the only interpreter available. So, I am constantly running from one side of the building to another. Even before working at CHEMED, I imagined being busy as a part of my career, so I love every moment of what I do.

Interpreting is difficult at times, but I try to view every encounter with a patient as an opportunity to learn something new. The hardest part of what I do is making sure to speak Spanish properly. In any language, there are formal and informal ways of speaking, though the majority of us speak incorrectly. Since my professors taught me to speak Spanish properly, I do occasionally get confused by patients, who insist on using terminology or grammar that I have been taught is incorrect. At times, I find myself mirroring their speech, but I always try to pull myself back and do what I know is right. The second hardest part of my job is learning new medical terminology. I literally learn a new word every day. My biggest misconception about medical interpretation was that I knew everything but the medical terms. I never thought that learning how to say horseradish or bleach would be important, until I had to tell patients that they were allergic to them. Simple things that I never thought to learn have found their way onto the list of procedures, conditions and infections I am constantly trying to memorize.

There were two things that surprised me about where I worked as well. First, I am one of only two Spanish-speakers at work who know how to write in Spanish; the other is a doctor. Second, I have to admit that while sitting in classes at M.U. studying, I never thought that my ability to write in Spanish would be at times just as valuable as interpreting. I cannot imagine having to fill out paperwork I could not understand, so why should our Spanish-speaking patients have to if I can help? Translating documents that patients have to fill out is something that I do in my spare time.

Something else that I never counted on happening was becoming attached to the patients that I interpret for. Many of them know me by name, recognize my voice on the phone, and request me as their interpreter when they come in for their appointments. Each time they come to CHEMED, I learn more about them as a person. Some

(Continued on page 6)

Student News

Samantha Lienhard had her story published at Fried Fiction: http://www.friedfiction.com/index.html?series=323001 Participants submit the first episode of a serial, and if it accepted, are allowed to update it at will. Samantha tries to update hers weekly, so she can space it out and look over each section.

English Professors Lecture Abroad

(Continued from page 3)

university in China. American students may also participate in the 1+2+1 program, completing their sophomore and junior years in China, and receiving degrees from both their Chinese institution and MU. The 1+2+1 program also encourages institutions to exchange faculty as "visiting scholars.

First, let me say that, even though John and I like to travel and often talk about places we'd like to visit, China never came up in our discussions of where we'd like to go next. It seemed much too far away, much too difficult to get to, or to get around in once we were there. But that was before we met and befriended some Chinese colleagues who recently visited Mansfield and sat in on our classes. When Dr. Zhao invited us to Nanjing, promising to put us up at her university's downtown campus, the impossible seemed possible. And a pretty good idea, at that.

While in Nanjing, we stayed on China Pharmaceutical University's downtown campus, in the heart of Nanjing. Our lectures, however, took place at the new campus just outside of the city, where the Department of Foreign Languages is now located. John gave a lecture on "Monster Literature" to group of undergraduate English majors, and presented another lecture on "Literary Research and Publication in the United States" to the Foreign Languages faculty. I lectured on "U.S. Slave Narratives" to a group of second-year English majors, and gave another lecture on "Literature of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement" to a group of first-year English majors. Dr. Zhao also arranged for John to give his "Monster Literature" lecture to students pursuing the master's degree in English at Nanjing Normal University, Dr. Zhao's alma mater. All of the lectures were well-received and prompted many interesting questions about monsters, race relations in the U.S. and about how American academics do research. In addition to re-connecting with Dr. Zhao and meeting her husband and daughter for the first time, we were pleased to meet other members of

(Continued on page 6)

English Professors Lecture Abroad

(Continued from page 5)

the China Pharmaceutical's Foreign Language faculty, including Professor Guoshen Zhang, Dean of the Foreign Languages Department, Professor Zhixiang Shi, Deputy Director of the Office of International Exchange and Cooperation, and many others. We had many fine meals with the members of the Foreign Languages Department, and ate lots of delicious new foods, such as sea snail soup, foot-long green beans, eels, and a variety of dumplings. While in Nanjing, Professor Zhao took us to many important historical and cultural sites, including the Nanjing Massacre Memorial, the Nanjing Museum, the Nanjing Brocade Museum, the Mausoleum of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, and the tomb of the first Ming Emperor. It was fascinating not only to see significant historical sites, but to see the reactions of Chinese people who noticed us. Younger people tended to wave and say, "Hello, hello!" and a few asked to take our picture.

After lecturing in Nanjing, we traveled to Changshu, near Shanghai, at the invitation of Professor Xiaohong Wu, who was a visiting scholar at Mansfield in the Spring 2010 semester. While visiting Professor Wu's university, the Changshu Institute of Technology, I presented my "U.S. Slave Narratives" lecture to a group of undergraduate students and John delivered his lecture on "Literary Research and Publication in the United States" to the Foreign Languages faculty. After their lectures, we were honored to meet Dr. Guohong Dai, Vice-President of Changshu Institute of Technology, who thanked both of us for traveling to Changshu and expressed his desire for developing stronger ties between Mansfield University and Changshu Institute of Technology. We also met with several other administrators and faculty members at an amazing 17-course lunch. While in Changshu, Professor Wu and her husband invited us into their home and took us to the beautiful park by Shanghu Lake, as well as up into the hills overlooking the Yangtze delta region.

We then traveled back to Nanjing, where we met our former students Zhen Cai and Di Yang. Both students were English majors at Mansfield during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years under the auspices of the 1+2+1 program, and both have now completed their final undergraduate year in China and are set to graduate in June with degrees from their home institution and Mansfield. Zhen Cai has been accepted into the master's program in conference interpretation and translation at the University of Leeds, in the UK, while Di Yang is currently applying to graduate schools in the US. It was good to see our students again, and this time they served as our guides.

For more information on Mansfield's 1+2+1 program, contact Dr. Jianfeng Wang, Department of Business and Economics, at pwang@mansfield.edu.

Cabin at Shotpouch Creek

(Continued from page 3)

After only two weeks, Alison had written first drafts of two essay/chapters for her book on place. I had written four shorter poems (1-2 pages) and a long sequence of poems imagining the Medieval abbess, poet and songwriter Hildegard of Bingen being with us at the cabin. We both went back to our teaching duties in the Fall refreshed and inspired.

Happiness in the Middle of an Adrenaline Rush

(Continued from page 5)

children update me on school or blow me kisses when they leave. Older patients treat me like a daughter or granddaughter while the younger ones treat me like an old friend. It's very flattering to have patients treat me in such a manner or tell me that they can't believe that I'm not Latina. Their highest form of praise, however, is the amount of trust they place in me. When a patient is panicking or unsure of what is going on and I approach and communicate with them, the expression on their face is enough to get me through the entire day. It lets me know that what I do is necessary and appreciated.

My advice to any college student or even a high-school-student is to choose a field of study that you know you can work in for the rest of your life and be happy with at the same time. I cannot put into words how speaking and interpreting makes me feel. It is what gets me out of bed every morning, what gives me an adrenaline rush, what I talk about when I get home and what leaves me feeling accomplished at the end of the day. I can confidently say that there is nothing in this world that would make me half as happy as Spanish does. I know that this is what I am supposed to do.

As the editors of the Accent, we want you to know that we are grateful for any comments, concerns, or more importantly contributions to the next volume.

With any luck the next EML ACCENT will be even better.